

For Immediate Release  
April 15, 2004

Bryan Wilkes  
202-586-7371

## **NNSA Elevates National Ignition Facility Program**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has named a new, senior-level manager to oversee the Inertial Confinement Fusion Program and the construction and activation of the National Ignition Facility (NIF), NNSA Deputy Administrator Everet Beckner announced today.

The move consolidates the NIF Project Office and the Inertial Confinement Fusion Program under an assistant deputy administrator for inertial fusion and the NIF project, who will report directly to Beckner. NIF construction had previously been organized in the deputy administrator's immediate office and the Inertial Confinement Fusion Program had been placed in the Office of Research, Development and Simulation.

"This is the right time to make a move," Beckner said. "Although NIF is not yet complete, construction has proceeded far enough for us to begin stockpile stewardship experiments later this year. The reorganization will help ensure that a senior manager has direct responsibility for NIF construction as well as coordination of the project with the Stockpile Stewardship Program."

In addition to NIF the new office will oversee the other components of the Inertial Confinement Fusion and High Yield Campaign, including the OMEGA laser at the University of Rochester and the Z machine at Sandia National Laboratories.

When completed in 2008, NIF will be the world's largest and highest energy laser system, and a key component of NNSA's Office of Defense Programs Stockpile Stewardship Program. NNSA has set a central goal of achieving inertial confinement fusion ignition with energy gain at NIF in 2010. This is a major scientific milestone. Ignition, which has never occurred other than in the stars of the universe or in exploding nuclear devices, will provide researchers with a better understanding of the processes that occur in nuclear weapons and valuable data for future fusion energy production.

Beckner has named Dr. Christopher J. Keane, currently director of the division of secondaries and inertial fusion, as acting assistant deputy administrator for inertial fusion and the NIF project. Keane has been at NNSA since 1996, and director of the division of secondaries and inertial fusion since 2000.

The Stockpile Stewardship Program is responsible for ensuring the safety, security, and reliability of the United States nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear testing.

NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency of the Department of Energy. It enhances U.S. national security through the military application of nuclear energy, maintains the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, promotes international nuclear nonproliferation and safety, reduces global danger from weapons of mass destruction, provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion, and oversees its national laboratories to maintain U.S. leadership in science and technology.

###